



***Rhode Island Department of Corrections
Correctional Officer Examination
Informational Guide***

2021

RI DOC Correctional Officer Examination Informational Guide

Introduction

This information guide has been developed to familiarize you with the Rhode Island Department of Corrections Correctional Officer Examination. The guide provides you with information on the following:

- I. Overview of Correctional Officer Examination (p. 1)
- II. Description of Written Tests, Instructions, & Example Questions (pp. 1-4)
- III. Effective Test Preparation Strategies (pp. 4-6)
- IV. Frequently Asked Questions (p. 7)

Please carefully read and study this guide prior to your testing date.

I. Overview of Correctional Officer Examination

The Rhode Island Department of Corrections (RI DOC) will use the Correctional Officer exam to identify qualified candidates for entry into the Training Academy. The exam is made up of two multiple-choice tests – a Correctional Officer Situational Test and a Background Information Inventory. Your scores on both tests will help determine whether your skills and characteristics match those necessary to be successful in the CO job.

The administration of the exam will take approximately 2 hours and 15 minutes in total, including check-in. You will take the exam on a computer. Once you begin the exam, you will be permitted to work at your own pace. There will be no scheduled breaks during the exam.

Check In	15 minutes
Introductory Remarks	5 minutes
Correctional Officer Situational Test	55 minutes
Background Information Inventory	40 minutes
Check Out	15 minutes

II. Description of Written Tests, Instructions, & Example Questions

The written examination consists of two tests:

1.	Correctional Officer Situational Test	55 minutes
2.	Background Information Inventory	40 minutes

This section will provide you with a description of each test as well as example questions to familiarize you with the test's format.

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Correctional Officer Situational Test **52 Questions (55 Minutes)**

The Correctional Officer Situational Test measures specific skills or characteristics that are important to success as a Correctional Officer at RI DOC. The test was specifically designed for the entry-level CO job at RI DOC.

The test requires no prior RI DOC or general Corrections experience or knowledge. The test is not intended in any way to be a test of your knowledge of policy or technical aspects of the job. Any such information that may be needed to answer a question is provided in the test itself. Base your answers only on information in the test and your own judgment.

Each test question will present a situation that could be encountered in the Correctional Officer job, along with four possible responses. You should choose a response that describes what you think is the best way to handle the situation.

If you are not sure of the answer, you should try to narrow down the choices and make your best guess. It is to your advantage to answer all questions. Your score will be based on the number of questions you answer correctly.

Each test item and set of responses has been audio recorded. You can choose to read the test silently on your own, or to listen to the audio recording of the test items. There is no penalty for listening to the test. You should choose the approach that will help you do your best on the test. Instructions for listening to the audio will be provided on the day of the test.

You will have no more than 55 minutes to complete the Situational Test and review your answers.

You will be provided with detailed instructions during the test administration.

Below is an example item.

Example Situational Test Question:



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Inmates are allowed to use phones only during scheduled hours. After normal phone hours, an inmate tells you his sister is having a baby. The inmate is worried and wants to know how things are going. The inmate has asked to borrow your cell phone to call his family for an update. What would you do?

Four potential responses to this situation are presented below:

- A. Let the inmate use your phone but supervise the call.*
- B. Discipline the inmate for asking for a favor.*
- C. Tell the inmate to ask another officer.*
- D. Tell the inmate to use the designated phones during scheduled hours.*

To answer the question, you should select the best response from the alternatives provided. The best response to this situation is “D”. The question states that inmates are allowed to use phones only during scheduled hours.

Background Information Inventory **48 Questions (40 Minutes)**

The Background Information Inventory will ask you questions about your experiences, interests, and preferences.

Each question will refer to you and your personal experiences and will cover many different topics. Each question will be followed by four response options. For each question, you will be asked to select the one response option that is most true for you.

Unlike some tests, there is no one “correct” response to each question. You should think about each question carefully and give your most accurate and honest response. Your answers should describe you, not what you think other people may want to hear.

Some of the questions may not apply exactly to you. Consider the general sense of the question and pick the choice that comes closest to describing your situation: for example, questions that refer to your current or previous job(s) and education (for example, high school or college) should also be answered in terms of similar past experiences (such as clubs, organizations, etc.) if the question is relevant to those experiences.

You should work quickly and accurately and avoid spending too much time thinking about how to respond to any single question. You should respond to every question.

Each test item and set of responses has been audio recorded. You can choose to read the test silently on your own, or to listen to the audio recording of the test items. There is no penalty for listening to the test. You should choose the approach that will help you do your best on the test. Instructions for listening to the audio will be provided on the day of the test.

You will have no more than 40 minutes to complete the Background Information Inventory and review your answers.

You will be provided with detailed instructions during the test administration.

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Below is an example item.

Example Background Information Inventory Question:

Which of the following do you prefer MOST in a job?

- A. Working mostly with others as a team*
- B. Spending equal time working with others as a team and working on my own*
- C. Working mostly on my own*
- D. I am not sure*

You should have chosen the option that is most true for you.

III. Effective Test Preparation Strategies

This section contains a number of different suggestions that may help you prepare for and take the test. As you read these suggestions, try to determine which ones will be most helpful to you. ***Please keep in mind that these are only suggestions and that different people may find some of the suggestions more or less helpful than others.***

Advanced Preparation for the Testing Session

Familiarize Yourself with Instructions and the Types of Test Questions

Carefully read and become familiar with the instructions and the types of test questions that are described in the informational guide. You will feel more comfortable during the test if you are familiar with the instructions and types of questions prior to the actual test administration. Reading and responding to the example questions that are included in this guide will help you become familiar with the general format of the test. Try and imagine other questions that are like the practice questions. Becoming familiar with the tests will save time and anxiety on test day.

Take Care of Your Well-Being Before the Test

Be sure to get enough sleep – a good night's sleep is especially critical the night before the test. You should also take steps to increase the quality of your sleep. Disrupted sleep affects memory, mood, and general well-being. Caffeine in the evening, or excessive caffeine at any time, may make it more difficult to fall asleep and will also affect the quality of your sleep. A good diet may also affect your ability to perform well on the test. Make sure that you get enough nutritional foods before the test. Finally, you may find it helpful to have an exercise routine as part of your test preparation. A healthy body gives you more energy and focus.

Manage Your Anxiety

If you feel anxious before or during the test, take several slow, deep breaths to relax. Also, please realize that it is normal to be somewhat nervous even if you are well prepared.

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Practice Your Listening Skills

The test administrator will read the instructions aloud to you, and you may choose to listen to an audio recording of the test items. Your ability to listen to and clearly understand the instructions, questions, and/or situations will impact how well you will do on the test. Poor listening habits include:

- *Interruptions* – Poor listeners often interrupt the speaker before they finish.
- *Anxiety* – Over-anxiety may cause you to lose track of what is being said.
- *Daydreaming/Lack of Focus/Preoccupation* – The listener is not focused on the speaker, is not concentrating on what is being said, or is preoccupied with something so that he/she “tunes out” what is being said.

Instead, actively listen to the information being provided in the tests by:

- Concentrating on the instructions, questions, and/or situation being presented to you.
 - Making sure that you understand the instructions or what is being asked.
 - Refocusing on what is being said and asking for clarification on the instructions if you do not fully understand them or your attention is wandering.
-

Day of the Testing Session

Arriving at the Testing Location

During the testing session, you will be in a room with several other candidates. Below are some general tips to help you be successful when you arrive at the testing location.

- Arrive at the test site early, but not too early. Excessive waiting or downtime can contribute to anxiety. The suggested arrival time is at least 30 minutes prior to the start of the session to allow sufficient time for check-in.
- **Do NOT bring any electronic communication devices (e.g., cell phones, laptops, smartwatches) into the building where you are taking the test.**
- Remain detached from others who might distract you. It is particularly important to avoid loud groups and those who are obviously uncomfortable about the upcoming test.

Stay Relaxed and Focused on the Test

During the testing session, it is important to stay relaxed and focused on the test. To perform your best, you need to be positive and confident. Work quickly, but accurately. You should try to complete all questions on the test, but if you find yourself working a little slowly, do not sacrifice accuracy for speed.

Listen to and Read the Instructions/Questions Carefully

The test administrator will read the instructions aloud. Be sure to follow along on the testing website. Each test has different instructions. The instructions will clarify any issues that are specific to the test you are taking. Be sure that you understand what to do for each test. If you have any questions, be sure to ask them before the test begins.

Know the Time Limits and Use the Time Wisely

The test administrator will read aloud the time limit for each exercise during the instructions. The testing website will include a timer. It is important to use the time limits to pace yourself. Occasionally

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check your testing progress against the timer. If you are having difficulty answering a question, go on to the next question. If you have time left when you get to the end of an exercise, you may go back and answer any skipped questions or review your answers. Finally, do not panic if others finish the test before you. Everyone takes tests at different speeds. Stay focused and complete as many of the questions as you can in the time provided.

Proceed Through the Correctional Officer Situational Test Questions Strategically

It helps to have a strategic plan to answer the Situational Test questions:

- ***Answer “easy” questions first:*** Answer test questions where you feel confident in the answer first. Skip the “unsure” or “do not know” questions and return to these questions after you have answered all of the questions you feel sure about. This will prevent you from spending too much time on any one question and ensure that you have the time to respond to, and receive credit for, every question that you can answer correctly. When you have worked through all of the questions, the testing website will flag any questions you left unanswered for your review.
- ***Do not get stuck on words or sentences you do not understand:*** You may still understand the main idea of the sentence or paragraph without understanding the individual word or sentence.
- ***Use the process of elimination:*** If you are unsure of how to answer a question, first eliminate the choices that you think are clearly incorrect. Then reread and re-evaluate the remaining choices. You may also decide to skip the question and come back to it later. There is no penalty for selecting an incorrect answer in this test, so answer every question.

Answering Background Information Inventory Questions

The Background Information Inventory asks you questions about your experiences, background, opinions, and/or feelings. When completing this exercise, you should consider the following helpful hints:

- Read each question carefully to ensure that you understand exactly what it is asking.
- Some of the questions may not apply exactly to you. Consider the general sense of the question and pick the choice that comes closest to describing your situation.
- Respond accurately and honestly to each question. Truthfulness is critical in this process.
- Review your answers if there is time; resist the urge to stop working as soon as you complete all the items.

Additional Resources on Test Taking Strategies

It is your responsibility to be well prepared for the testing session. We have introduced some basic steps that will help you feel more positive and confident about test taking. There are numerous books that have been written on test taking and strategies for taking tests. If there is a subject that interests you, check your local library or the Internet for additional resources.

IV. Frequently Asked Questions

How long will the test take?

You should expect to be testing for approximately 2 hours and 15 minutes for check-in, test instructions, and administration.

Will breaks be provided during the examination?

No official breaks will be provided during the examination. If you need to use the restroom during the testing session, please raise your hand and wait for assistance.

What should I bring to the test?

Applicants must bring photo identification (e.g., driver's license, government ID, passport). Applicants will not be granted access to the testing site without proper identification. No food may be consumed during the testing sessions. You must wear a mask throughout your visit and testing cycle.

What should I NOT bring to the test?

Please do **NOT** bring any cell phones, smart watches, tablets, books, calculators, or other test aids to the test administration. The use of such devices in the test center will be strictly prohibited.

Who will be administering the test?

The Rhode Island Department of Corrections will be administering the written examination.

What should I wear to the test?

Professional attire is encouraged. Applicants should report for testing in appropriate casual business attire.

When will I find out my results?

Following the test, you will be notified whether you have been selected to move forward in the selection process once the results have been tabulated.